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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ADDIS ABABA 001493

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DEPARTMENT FOR AF AND AF/E , AND INR/AA
LONDON, PARIS, ROME FOR AFRICA WATCHER
CJTF-HOA AND USCENTCOM FOR POLAD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/27/2018
TAGS: [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [SO](#) [ET](#)
SUBJECT: ETHIOPIA WILLING TO INCREASE COUNTERTERRORISM
COOPERATION

Classified By: Ambassador Donald Yamamoto. Reason 1.4 (B) and (D).

11. (C/NF) SUMMARY. Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi told Ambassador-at-Large Coordinator for Counterterrorism Dell L. Dailey and Ambassador Yamamoto on May 21, 2008 that his government was grateful for the counterterrorism support it received from the United States and that Ethiopia was willing to do more. Meles said that Ethiopia will stay in Somalia until the job was completed or as long its stay was possible and meaningful. Ambassador Dailey urged Prime Minister Meles to take special care in the Ogaden regarding respect for human rights and the opening up of humanitarian access. Meles assured the Ambassadors that Ethiopia was going to great lengths to avoid civilian casualties, but noted that too many NGO staff members were working in direct support of the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF). Meles also asked that the United States examine declaring the ONLF and the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) as terrorist organizations. In a separate meeting on May 21, National Security Advisor Abay Tsehay said that his government was grateful for its relationship with the United States and that the Ethiopian government was ready to do more with Washington to fight terrorism in the region. END SUMMARY.

JOINT FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISM

12. (C/NF) Ambassador Dailey opened by expressing condolences for those killed in the May 20 terrorist bombing of a minibus in Addis Ababa. He then thanked Prime Minister Meles for the cooperation Ethiopia had given to the United States in the fight against terrorism. Meles responded that his government was grateful for the support from the United States and he emphasized that Ethiopia faces an intractable fight against terrorism "no matter what" with or without the support of the United States. Meles and Ambassador Dailey both agreed that the cooperation between the their two governments should increase in the future. Meles said that "this fight is our fight" and he was grateful for friends to augment Ethiopia's counterterrorism capacity.

MELES: "WE WILL STAY IN SOMALIA AS LONG AS POSSIBLE"

13. (C/NF) Meles stated that Somalia was an important aspect of the fight against terrorism. He complained that Ethiopia

was carrying the disproportionate share of the burden in casualties and cost. He also asserted that Ethiopia had been the victim of a vicious propaganda campaign by NGOs and the media regarding its activities in Somalia. Meles said he was "getting the short end of the stick," but made it clear that Ethiopia would stay in Somalia until the task was completed or as long as their stay was possible and meaningful. Meles added that if the international community wanted to speed up Ethiopia's withdrawal from Somalia, they had a responsibility to speed up the full deployment of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) peacekeeping force.

RESPECT HUMAN RIGHTS AND HUMANITARIAN ACCESS IN THE OGADEN

¶4. (C/NF) Ambassador Dailey urged the Prime Minister to take special care in the Somali Region of Ethiopia to respect human rights and open up space for humanitarian assistance. Ambassador Dailey noted that an aggressive "capture or kill" strategy against insurgents must be balanced with a broader approach that addressed the deeper political, economic, and social problems to ensure success. He asked Meles to examine these ideas and develop a good plan that included effective health care and poverty reduction elements.

¶5. (C/NF) Meles responded that the Ethiopian people were grieved when human rights issues are raised and the dozens of Ethiopians killed in the April 24, 2007 ONLF attack were not treated equally with the alleged killing of civilians by the Ethiopian military while fighting the ONLF. Meles said that

ADDIS ABAB 00001493 002 OF 002

his government knows from its own experience as insurgents that when the government uses a "sledgehammer" it is counterproductive. Meles noted that he had read General Petraeus' book on counterinsurgency and that the book reinforced what Meles already knew from past experience. Meles emphasized that his government had gone to great lengths to avoid civilian casualties. Meles said that "I cannot tell you not a single hut has been burned," but added that there were times when he ordered the military to cease operations to avoid civilian deaths.

¶6. (C/NF) Meles noted, however, that too many NGO staff on the ground in the Ogaden had been helping the ONLF. He said that the local staff were infested with ONLF supporters and sympathizers. Meles, naming the ICRC in particular, said that his government had interdicted NGO trucks carrying supplies to the ONLF, but admitted that the ICRC office in Geneva was not involved. He said that when the government had restricted NGO activities it was only to stop rebel resupply and was never intended to deny humanitarian assistance to the civilian population.

OLF/ONLF ON TERRORIST LIST?

¶7. (C/NF) Lastly, Meles raised the issue of why the OLF and the ONLF were not listed by the United States as terrorist organizations. Meles said that both groups had been involved in terrorist activities for some time and that the OLF had even taken credit for terrorist acts on Voice of America (VOA) radio. Meles urged Ambassador Dailey to examine this issue and said that it would help Ethiopia if Washington would curtail OLF and ONLF activities in the United States. Ambassador Dailey asked the Prime Minister to provide evidence of OLF and ONLF terrorist activities for Washington to examine.

NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISOR WELCOMES BI-LATERAL COOPERATION

¶8. (C/NF) In a separate meeting on May 21, National

Security Advisor Abay Tsehay echoed Meles' earlier comments, telling Ambassador Dailey and Ambassador Yamamoto that Ethiopia welcomed its relationship with Washington and that the two countries should do more together. Abay said Ethiopia was ready to work with the United States "in all things." Abay said Ethiopia was committed to economic development and that he did not want instability and terrorism to divert his government from its economic goals. Abay stated that he wanted to professionalize Ethiopia's counterterrorism capacity and he welcomed assistance from the United States to meet this goal. He said he also appreciated Washington's efforts to get other African nations to do their part as well.

19. (U) Amb. Dailey did not have an opportunity to review this cable.
YAMAMOTO